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# APPEAL SOCIALIST CLASSICS

EDITED BY W. J. GHENT

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No. 8

## Socialism and the Farmer

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APPEAL TO REASON

Girard, Kansas



# THE SERIES

The pamphlets in this series are composed, in the main, of selections from the published work of Socialist writers, mostly of the present day. In some of them, particularly "Socialist Documents" and "Socialism and Government," the writings used are mainly of collective, rather than individual authorship; while the Historical Sketch is the composition of the editor.

To the selections given, the editor has added explanatory and connecting paragraphs, welding the fragments into a coherent whole. The aim is the massing together in concise and systematic form, of what has been most clearly and pertinently said, either by individual Socialist writers or by committees speaking for the party as a whole, on all of the main phases of Socialism.

In their finished form they might, with some appropriateness, be termed mosaics: each pamphlet is an arrangement of parts from many sources according to a unitary design. Most of the separate pieces are, however, in the best sense classics: they are expressions of Socialist thought which, by general approval, have won authoritative rank. A classic, according to James Russell Lowell, is of itself "something neither ancient nor modern"; even the most recent writing may be considered classic if, for the mood it depicts or the thought it frames, it unites matter and style into an expression of approved merit.

For the choice of selections the editor is alone responsible. Doubtless for some of the subjects treated another editor would have chosen differently. The difficulty indeed has been in deciding what to omit; for the mass of Socialist literature contains much that may be rightly called classic which obviously could not have been included in these brief volumes.

The pamphlets in the series are as follows:

1. THE ELEMENTS OF SOCIALISM.
2. THE SCIENCE OF SOCIALISM.
3. SOCIALISM: A HISTORICAL SKETCH.
4. SOCIALIST DOCUMENTS.
5. SOCIALISM AND GOVERNMENT.
6. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.
7. SOCIALISM AND ORGANIZED LABOR.
8. SOCIALISM AND THE FARMER.
9. SOCIALISM AND SOCIAL REFORM.
10. THE TACTICS OF SOCIALISM.
11. THE SOCIALIST APPEAL.
12. SOCIALISM IN VERSE.

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## PREFACE

This pamphlet deals first with the development of the Socialist agricultural program, principally that of the United States, though with some reference to the European programs. The resolution of 1908, which, however, was rejected by a referendum; the tentative "Suggestions for a Farmers' Program" of 1910, and the full text of the committee report of 1912, with the program, and of the Oklahoma renters' and farmers' program of 1914, are included.

To these are added, as an instructive description of present conditions in two predominantly agricultural states, the substance of the testimony of Patrick Nagle before the session of the Industrial Relations Commission held in Dallas, Texas; a vivid pen-picture of tenant and landlord as they appeared before that commission, and a supplementary contribution by Arthur Le Sueur. A paper by Walter Thomas Mills gives a general summary of farming conditions and certain proposed remedies. To some readers it will appear to be too reformistic to accord with the Socialist national platform. The fact should be remembered, however, that many of the arguments over the correct Socialist position to be taken on the agricultural problem have been extremely dogmatic and doctrinaire, wholly ignoring the need of measures of immediate relief. The paper is included as a contribution to the more moderate viewpoint.

The final chapter of A. M. Simons' "The American Farmer" points the way to the Socialist goal. A chapter of pertinent reminders to the farmers of America, by Allan L. Benson, furnishes the conclusion. W. J. G.

# SOCIALISM AND THE FARMER

## I.

### THE PARTY ATTITUDE.

#### GERMAN SOCIALISTS AND THE FARM PROBLEM.

Because the Socialist movement began as a movement of the industrial proletariat, and because the phenomena on which it based its contentions were predominantly industrial and urban, it was but natural that for many years the subject of agriculture should have been neglected. Yet as early as 1870 it was discussed in the Bebel-Liebkecht party of Germany and perhaps also by the Lassalle party. Not, however, until after the Erfurt congress (1891) did discussion of the question become general, and not until 1894 was it taken up officially for serious consideration and action.

At the Frankfurt congress, in that year, a resolution proposed by Von Vollmar and Schoerlank, taking sides with the peasant proprietors against their exploiters, was passed. It also provided for the selection of a committee of fifteen to submit to the next congress a detailed program. The text of the resolution, which is taken from Ensor's "Modern Socialism," is as follows:

#### FRANKFURT RESOLUTION (1894).

The agrarian question is the product of the modern economic system. The more home agriculture becomes dependent on the world market and the international competition of all agricultural countries, the more it enters the sphere of influence of capitalistic production of commodities, banking and usury, the more quickly is the agrarian question aggravated into the agrarian crisis.

In Prussian Germany the agricultural employing class, which is not distinct in essence from the great industrial capitalists, fights by the side of the rural nobility. This nobility is only maintained artificially by bounties, protective duties, rebates on exports and privileges in respect of taxation.

In spite of all, the junker-farming\* east of the Elba is largely over-indebted through bad agriculture, partition of inheritances and arrears of purchase money, and its doom is sealed.

To this must be added the constantly accentuated cleavage between the great landowners and the class of small peasants. The latter is tottering, burdened with military service and heavy taxes, hampered by mortgages and personal debts, and oppressed on all sides. For its protective duties are only an empty show. This fiscal policy cramps the purchasing power of the laboring class and restricts the peasant's market. The peasant is becoming proletarianized.

On the other hand, the class opposition between rural employers and rural workers is developed more and more clearly. From this has resulted a rural working class. It is bound by feudal laws, which deny to its members the right of combination and place them under the "ordinance of servants," while they no longer enjoy the old patriarchal relations, which gave them, as belonging to their masters, a definitely assured existence. The intermediate classes, day laborers with small holdings, dwarf peasants who are driven to wage-earning to supplement their resources, sink, in spite of all apparent reforms, into the class of the rural proletariat. With uncertainty of gain, wage pressure and bad management, and the increase of traveling laborers, the cleavage between landed capital and rural labor grows; and the class consciousness of the rural worker awakens.

Hence the great need that the Social Democracy shall occupy itself in the most serious manner with the agrarian question. The preliminary for this is a detailed knowledge of the agricultural situation. As in Germany this varies—technically, economically and socially—our propaganda must match it and be varied to suit the peculiarities of the country people.

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\*The junkers are the Prussian squirearchy, who owe their disproportionate political influence to the fact that they supply the Prussian army with its officers.



The agrarian question, as a necessary ingredient of the social question, will be finally solved only when the land, with all the means of work, is given back to the producers, who now as wage workers or small peasantry cultivate it in the service of capitalists. But at present the necessitous condition of the rural worker must be alleviated by fundamental reforms. The immediate object of the party is to formulate a special program of agrarian policy, explaining and completing the immediate demands of the Erfurt program, which are very advantageous for the peasants as well as for the country laborers, in an exposition adapted to the comprehension of the rural population.

The law protecting peasants ought to safeguard the peasant, whether as taxpayer, debtor or agriculturist.

The law protecting rural laborers should afford the rural laborer the right of combination and of public meeting; should place him on a level with the industrial workers (repeal of the "ordinance of servants"); and by special protective social legislation (as to work-time, conditions of work and inspectorates) should safeguard him from unbridled exploitation.

A special agrarian committee is to lay its proposals before the next congress.

#### THE PROGRAMS.

The committee divided itself into three sub-committees, one each for North, Central and South Germany, and each drafted a program for its section. Though the details are different, there is a general similarity in the underlying principles. These programs, on their publication, aroused opposition, the one drafted by Von Vollmar for South Germany encountering the greatest antagonism on account of its evident promise of security to the small proprietor in the right of ownership. The program for North Germany, drafted by Bebel, Liebknecht, Molkenbuhr, Schippel and Schoenlank, somewhat more guarded, was as follows. The text is from Ensor's "Modern Socialism":

1. Organization by the (imperial) state of loans on mortgages. Interest on loans to cover costs only.
2. Organization by the (imperial) state of the insur-

ance of movable and immovable property against fire, hail or floods and the insurance of cattle.

3. Construction and maintenance of public streets, roads and watercourses by the (imperial) state.

4. The maintenance of common property (common lands) and common rights over water, woods and pasture.

5. Transformation of property in mortmain, of lands belonging to institutions and churches, into public property.

6. Founding of compulsory co-operative societies for improvements, irrigation and drainage, and support of these co-operative societies by state loans.

7. The establishment of public technical agricultural schools and experimental stations, and the holding of regular lectures upon agriculture. Teaching, school appliances and maintenance free.

8. Lowering of the rates for personal and goods traffic.

9. Transference to the public of all private forests. Free sporting rights on lands owned or rented. Full compensation for all damages done in hunting and by game.

10. Chambers of agriculture, where all persons engaged in agriculture shall be on an equal footing.

11. Agricultural arbitration courts for the settlement of all disputes arising out of conditions of wages, work or service.

12. Compulsory insurance against sickness of workmen and servants, and also of independent cultivators whose income does not exceed 2,000 marks (\$500).

13. Veterinary attendance and medicines without charge.

#### BRESLAU RESOLUTION (1895)

By the time of the Breslau congress the following year the opposition had become overwhelming, and the programs were all rejected in a resolution drawn up by Kautsky. The text, which is from Ensor's "Modern Socialism," is as follows:

The draft agrarian program proposed by the agrarian commission is to be rejected, because it sets before the eyes

of the peasantry the improvement of their position, that is, the confirmation of their private ownership; it proclaims the interest of agriculture in the modern social system to be an interest of the proletariat; and yet the interest of agriculture, like that of industry, is, under the rule of private property in the means of production, an interest of the possessor of the means of production, who exploits the proletariat. Further, the draft agrarian program suggests new weapons for the state of the exploiting class, and thereby renders the class war of the proletariat more difficult; and, lastly, it sets before the capitalistic state objects which can be usefully carried out only by a state in which the proletariat has captured political power.

The congress recognizes that agriculture has its peculiar laws, differing from those of industry, which must be studied and considered if the Social Democracy is to develop an extended operation in rural districts. It therefore suggests to the committee of the party that, having regard to the impetus already given by the agrarian commission, it might entrust a number of suitable persons with the task of undertaking a fundamental study of the matter available concerning German agrarian conditions, and publishing the results of this study in a series of articles as a "collection of works on agrarian policy by the Social Democratic Party of Germany."

The committee of the party is fully empowered to make the necessary expenditure to enable the comrades entrusted with the work in question to complete their task.

#### LATER DISCUSSIONS AND PROGRAMS.

The subject was hotly debated both in the party press and in subsequent German congresses up to 1908, though with no definite decision. The discussion resulted, however, in two notable works, Kautsky's "The Agricultural Question" (1898) and Dr. Eduard David's "Socialism and Land Ownership" (1903). David declares in favor of peasant proprietorship. Kautsky, though contending against any policy that would strengthen the peasants in their proprietorship, asserts the impossibility of expropriating their lands and looks forward to the time when

they will combine their holdings and work them in common.

In some other European countries, particularly France, Italy and Belgium, elaborate agricultural programs have, in later years, been formulated. In all lands where the question is discussed the issue of collective ownership of all land as against the right of private ownership of land not used for speculation or exploitation has been and still remains the chief matter of contention. The French program definitely guarantees the peasant proprietor in his ownership.

#### THE AMERICAN PROGRAM.

The need of an agricultural program was declared in the national conventions of 1901 and 1904, but it was not until 1908 that the real beginnings were made. In the convention of that year two brief reports were submitted from the farmers' committee. The majority report concluded with the statement that "it is not essential to the Socialist program that any farmer shall be dispossessed of the land which he himself occupies and tills." The minority report took issue with this position and declared for a complete socialization of the industries of the nation. After considerable discussion the minority report, slightly amended, was adopted by a vote of 99 to 51. As amended, it is as follows:

#### RESOLUTION OF 1908.

We recognize the class struggle and the necessity for united action among the world's workers of every vocation as against the capitalist class exploitation.

The Socialist party stands for construction and not destruction, and it pledges to the small farmer protection through the socialization of the national industries, in production for use and not for profit.

We therefore recommend that the farmer study the economies of the co-operative social system as against the individual competitive system and ally his political power in the struggle for existence with the party of the working class. But we insist that any attempt to pledge to the farmer anything but a complete socialization of the industries of the nation would be unsocialistic.\*

At the same convention a standing farmers' committee of seven was elected "to study the agricultural question in its

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\*Proceedings (1908) p. 179.

relation to Socialism and report recommendations to the membership of the party through the Socialist press at least one year before the next national convention." On the submission, however, of the foregoing resolution to the party membership, it was rejected, the party thus refusing to commit itself to the absolute collective ownership of land.

#### THE 1910 CONGRESS.

Two years later, at the special party congress held in Chicago, the chairman of the standing committee, A. M. Simons, submitted a preliminary report consisting in part of certain suggestions for the further work of the committee and the text of the farmers' program of the Socialist party of Oklahoma, which had then just been formulated. Further suggestions of some length were submitted by another member of the committee, Algernon Lee. The whole committee (which by this time had been reduced to three) concurred in the draft of the document given below. It was, in most respects, as stated by the chairman, similar to a program adopted at a then recent convention of the Socialists of France. The French program, however, guaranteed to the peasant the ownership of his farm. The American document, while not following the French program in this particular, refused to commit itself to absolute collective ownership of the land. The text follows:

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR FARMERS' PROGRAM.

1. Whether, fifty or a hundred years hence, it will be found socially desirable that the land should be held as national property, that it should be held under some other form of social ownership or some portions of it should be held as social property and other portions as the property of individuals, may be an interesting subject for academic discussion. In the field of industry, what the Socialist movement demands is the social ownership and control of the socially operated means of production, not of all means of production. Only to a very small extent is the land now—only to a very small extent is it likely to be, for many years to come—a socially operated means of production. Even to declare in any dogmatic manner that all the land must eventually become social property is somewhat utopian; to demand that the ownership of all land shall be immediately socialized is to make ourselves ridiculous.

2. With the writers of the "Communist Manifesto" we agree in the principle of the "application of all rents of land to public purposes." To this end we advocate the taxing of all lands to their full rental value, the income therefrom to be applied to the establishment of industrial plants for the preparing of agricultural products for final consumption, such as packing houses, canneries, cotton gins, grain elevators, storage and market facilities.

3. We should include in our immediate demands the retention by the nation and by the state respectively of such lands as they still own, and such as they may hereafter secure by reclamation, purchase, condemnation or otherwise; such land to be organized into model state farms and various forms of collective agricultural enterprises, as far and as fast as practical under capitalistic development.

4. In the interest both of the farmers as producers and of the rest of the population as purchasers, we should lay emphasis upon the demand for the national ownership of the railways and the establishment by the nation (and, pending that, by any states in which we may have sufficient influence to effect it) of a system of public warehouses for the storage of all kinds of agricultural produce, the storage charges to be only sufficient to cover cost of operation and replacement, by which the farmer will be able to come into a more nearly direct relation with the consumer of his produce and to get a higher price for it while even reducing the price to the consumers.

5. We should encourage the formation of co-operative societies of various kinds—societies for the co-operative operation of creameries, cheese factories and other productive enterprises of a simple nature which draw their raw materials directly from the farms; societies for the co-operative ownership of agricultural machinery and the co-operative purchase of fertilizers, binding twine, implements and supplies of all sorts; and also societies of wage workers in the cities for the co-operative purchase of provisions and other goods, which can enter into relation with the farm-

ers' societies and partially eliminate middlemen's profits, while at the same time cultivating a mutual understanding and sympathy between the industrial and the agricultural producers. This subject of co-operation should be worked out carefully, on the basis especially of European experience, in order to avoid the danger of the co-operative societies degenerating into mere business enterprises and to develop their socialistic tendencies.

6. The creation of a system of state credit for the purpose of loaning money direct to farmers without the intervention of private banks. It is possible that this may at least partially be covered by the extension of the co-operative movement to the field of banking.

7. State and national insurance against diseases of animals or plants, insect pests and natural calamities.

8. We should have a series of special booklets and leaflets prepared for propaganda among the farmers, explaining in clear language the attitude of the Socialist movement, the benefits which it offers them, and the futility of their looking to either of the old parties for relief or hoping to advance their interests by the organization of a new farmers' party without the aid of the wage workers.

9. We should seriously consider the practicability of carrying on a work of propaganda and organization among the agricultural wage workers—not the individual farm hands of the old type, but the actual proletarians who play so large a role in the agriculture of the western states.\*

After a long and animated discussion the draft was, at the suggestion of the committee, referred back to that body, which was increased to nine and instructed to report at the next convention.

#### BASIS OF THE 1912 PROGRAM.

At the convention of 1912 the committee submitted an elaborate report, including a definite program. The speech of the chairman, A. M. Simons, explaining the report, is as follows:

I have come with this same proposition before every

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\*Proceedings (1910) pp. 219-220.

convention of the Socialist party held in the United States since the Socialist party was established. I came before the first one that was ever held in the United States, the first convention held at Indianapolis, and since that time, year after year, we have fought over this question. I have changed my own position on the question every time that I found a new fact which showed me that I was wrong in my former position, and this report is very much at variance with some that I have given before, because of the fact that in the last ten years there has been a complete change in the evolution of farm industries.

#### CONCENTRATION AND TENANTRY.

Ten years ago I said—and I said correctly—that there was not anywhere in the United States any sign that the concentration in farming would follow the lines that it had followed in factory industry, at least in any appreciable time. It was more like a geological process. But the last ten years has brought not only the disappearance of the frontier—and when that disappeared in America it had disappeared in the entire world, so that today we are no longer an agricultural exporting country; today we are no longer the granary of the world, and all through Europe the question of where the food of the world is coming from is becoming a pressing problem.

Behind that we find one of the causes of the tremendous rise in the cost of living. That fact has been reflected in this tremendous rise in the price of land that has transformed every little farmer, owner of his farm, into a land speculator. His income from the ownership of his farm as a speculator has been greater than his income from his ownership as an operator. Because of that fact he has now largely left the farm and is turning it over to a race of tenants.

#### STEAM POWER IN AGRICULTURE.

Coming along with that is the movement, now practically but three years old, for the introduction of other than



animal power in the operation of the farm. More than forty years ago the first steam plow was shown, but only within the last three years has it been effective. A few months ago I went into one of the great manufactories of these plows. The head of the company took me through twenty-three acres of factory, where three years before were open fields and houses, and every acre of that factory was devoted to the building of great farm tractors. With the disappearance of the horse and with the coming of these great mechanical powers, with the enormous increase in the cost of living, we are now confronted with a new problem of the farm, and it is time that we awoke to it.

#### RELIEF FOR LABORERS AND TENANTS.

Now, the recommendations that we make here we have made to relieve two classes, practically—the class of farm tenants and the class of farm laborers. We bring in little concerning the farm laborers, because they are covered by our regular recommendations in our regular platform and in our regular action. We take up the question of this land ownership and this question of the enormous increase in the value of land.

Some of you are going to be frightened because you catch a phrase there which you may think we borrowed from the single tax program. But I hope that no one will bring that up until he has read again the "Communist Manifesto," because long before Henry George ever heard of "Progress and Poverty," that principle had been incorporated in the "Manifesto." So I hope that unless you are willing to repudiate that "Communist Manifesto" you will not pick on that proposition. We say that if you take out the speculative value you will do away with this increase in farm tenantry.

#### THE SOCIALLY OWNED FARM.

In the second place, we ask you to adopt our third demand. That is a new demand. It was expressed two years

ago, but it is a new one to be presented to any Socialist party in the world. But I was surprised to have called to my attention by one of the comrades on the floor that Comrade Kautsky a little while ago surrendered his entire former position on this question and had declared that the time had now come for the Socialist movement to stand for the socially owned farm.

I believe the Socialist party can come out and stand for the establishment by the county organization and by the state organization of socially operated farms. Do you realize that it has been repeatedly discussed in the United States department of agriculture that they should establish experimental farms? We want something entirely different. We want a farm that shall be not primarily experimental, but one primarily productive, operated by society and which shall constitute a means of controlling rents and controlling farm labor by making it impossible to force wages down as they may be by private competition. We propose to make this the foundation of social production by giving us a grip upon the source of food supply.

#### FARMERS ENTERING THE FIGHT.

The other items are, on the whole, self-explanatory. Two years ago I finished my talk on this subject by asking you not to adopt in the platform the report that I brought in, because I thought that we did not know yet what we stood for. Since that time the states of Oklahoma, North Dakota, South Dakota, Texas, and, I presume, others have put farm programs in their platforms. They are going ahead. The farmers are going to get into the Socialist party and fight for Socialism whether we want them or not. . . .

That reminds me that the farmers from Texas are beginning to organize unions among the tenants: are beginning to fight on the economic and political field exactly the same sort of struggle that we are battling in the factory, in the mill, in the mine and in the store.

Now, then, I say that those comrades are taking up that subject. It is time that we struck out some lines nationally. It is time that we laid down principles that would apply to this class as well as to all divisions of the working class. We have spent thousands and thousands of dollars to reach the trade-unionists, and I want more spent in that way; but there are only two millions of them; we have spent all our resources on that small fraction, in the effort to reach the few mechanical and other industries, and no one of them has anywhere near the number of working men and women that are to be found upon the farms of this country.

SOCIALISM THE ONLY HOPE.

Take hold of this program; criticize it; tear it to pieces if you can. But I do hope that before you leave this hall you will say that, as for the Socialist Party of the United States, we are going to take a stand at least ahead of the insurgents and progressives and radicals who are trying today by every possible means to capture the vote of the small farmer and build up a peasant proprietorship in the United States. I do hope that we are going to take a step ahead of them; that we are going to make the Socialist party of America the actual expression on the political field of the entire working class, of the entire human race.

Comrades, we stand today at the parting of the ways. We are making tremendous inroads into the factory workers. The only hope that capitalism has to sweep back the on-rolling tide of revolution is to bank up against us the workers of the farm. To them they are appealing; to them they are offering everything that capitalism can offer to stay on the backs of the workers. We must go to the farmer and show him that he can not be relieved while he is being ridden by the capitalist class and that we alone come to him with the gospel of freedom, of emancipation, of social ownership, of everything necessary to the production of wealth and the satisfaction of life.\*

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\*Proceedings (1912) pp. 67-68.

**OBJECTIONS FULLY ANSWERED.**

During the convention, as well as before and after, through the press, the report occasioned considerable controversy. Among other criticisms was one, frequently reiterated, that it made "more concessions to small capitalist agriculturists than any other program that has ever been put forward by a Socialist party." These criticisms were fully answered in the discussions on the floor of the convention and elsewhere. "The real change in the present farmers' program," wrote Mr. Simons in a letter which appeared in the *National Socialist* of February 8, 1913, "over that of former years, lies in the recognition of the committee that recent developments tended to verify Marx's position in regard to concentration in agriculture, something that had not been hitherto apparent in this country. Therefore (and this involves the second point to which I would call attention), it was felt that there was no longer need for even so much consideration being paid to the small farm owner as hitherto, and as a further corollary to this conclusion that it was now possible to take a position advocating the socialization of agriculture along the same lines as Socialism has advocated in other lines of industry. This was the argument in the committee, on the floor of the convention, and is expressed in the program. Every person who took part in that discussion will bear me out in this statement. It was so understood by the extreme 'left' of the convention and accounts for their unanimous support of the program."

The report, which was adopted without division, is as follows:

**REPORT OF FARMERS' COMMITTEE.**

During the decade just passed agriculture in America has entered upon a new stage of evolution, which both in direction and velocity of movement differs sharply from that of previous years. The causes of this change are several.

1. Free land has disappeared, and the value of that now under cultivation is increasing more rapidly than ever before. From 1900 to 1910 this increase amounted to over 100 per cent for the entire nation. In the upper Mississippi valley, in so far as the census statistics are available, it appears that the value of the average farm is now about \$15,000. (In Illinois, \$15,505; in Iowa, \$17,259.) This is a sum fully equal to that which now separates the average wage worker from ownership in the tools of his industry,

and indicates that from now on the landless farmer must surrender all hope of ever entering the class of farm owners.

2. That the conclusion drawn above is correct is borne out by the fact that in the three states of Indiana, Iowa and Illinois (the only ones in this locality from which the census data are available) the total number of farms has decreased from 714,670 in 1900 to 684,410 in 1910. The agricultural counties of these states almost without exception show an absolute decrease in population, a still further proof of the same facts.

Still another fact leading to the same conclusion that the class of small farm owners is disappearing is the census statement that in these three states the number of farms of between twenty and 100 acres in area has absolutely decreased, while those of less than ten acres and of more than 175, show the most rapid rate of increase. This fact is indicative of the two forms in which agricultural concentration is operating: through the formation of intensively cultivated, artificially heated and wage-worker operated suburban market gardens and large mechanically cultivated farms.

Perhaps more important than any of the above facts as showing the growing separation of the farmer from the land is the remarkably accelerating rate at which farm tenantry is progressing. The census bulletins show that in the three states of Indiana, Iowa and Illinois, 30 per cent, 38 per cent and 41 per cent of all farms are now operated by tenants. Independent research shows that in the purely agricultural sections the actual average is over 50 per cent in these states. The situation in the south is even more striking. Here the census figures show that from 45 per cent to 66 per cent of all farms are operated by tenants, while investigation of the cotton farming districts (the overwhelmingly dominant agricultural industry) shows that fully 80 per cent of the cotton farms are operated by

tenants, whose condition is far below that of the average factory wage worker.

The land is not the only instrument essential to agricultural production whose ownership by the producer is growing more difficult. The cost of farm machinery and the animals necessary for cultivation where animal power is used is also increasing rapidly. With the introduction of other than animal power, which is now progressing at a most revolutionary rate, this cost will soon render these instruments also far beyond the reach of the farm worker. Along with this goes the multiplication of subsidiary industries performing operations hitherto handled upon the farm, or which are immediately essential to agriculture, but the machinery for which is completely out of the ownership of the farmer. Such are sugar beet factories, canning factories, packing houses, alfalfa mills, cotton gins, rice mills, etc.

The workers affected by these conditions reached a total of more than ten million in 1910, and constitute by far the largest number embraced in any single branch of industry. To confess ourselves unable to include these in the program of Socialism is to surrender our position as the political representative of the working class.

Of these ten million, 3,933,705 are still farm owners, and in spite of all the tendencies mentioned above this group increased over a quarter of a million in the last ten years, a greater increase than is to be found in any other single group of industrial workers, with the single extremely significant exception of the group of farm tenants, which added a little over 320,000 to its numbers during the same period, and which now includes 2,349,245 workers.

Far larger than either of these divisions is that of agricultural laborers, of which there were nearly four million in 1910. It is significant, however, that these are located geographically in sections largely apart from the other classes. So far as the census data is available it appears that nearly twice as much money is spent for agri-

cultural labor in the little county of Cook, in which the city of Chicago is located, as in any other county in the United States. In so far as farm laborers are employed either upon the highly capitalized and intensively cultivated gardens and green houses or upon large capitalistically organized ranches, fruit farms and mechanically operated farms in general, their problem is not distinctively different from that of other wage workers save that hitherto the difficulties of propaganda, education and organization among them have been greater than among other classes of wage workers. There are, however, certain definite steps (some of which are indicated in the program presented) which can be taken by a Socialist administered local or state government that will assist them in their struggle.

The extent of the problem, the complexity of the factors involved and the rapid changes that are now taking place in agriculture all emphasize the necessity of closer study of this problem and the need of the preparation of literature especially fitted to this field, and the committee would lay especial stress upon the urgent need of the preparation of literature and its extensive circulation.

As measures particularly suited to meet this problem we would recommend the adoption by the convention of the following program as indicating the lines of work to be pursued by a working class government for the especial relief of this largest division of that class:

#### PROPOSED FARMERS' PROGRAM.

1. The Socialist party demands that the means of transportation and storage and the plants used in the manufacture of farm products and farm machinery, when such means are used for exploitation, shall be socially owned and democratically managed.

2. To prevent the holding of land out of use and to eliminate tenantry, we demand that all farm land not cultivated by owners shall be taxed at its full rental value, and

that actual use and occupancy shall be the only title to land.

3. We demand the retention by the national, state or local governing bodies of all land owned by them, and the continuous acquirement of other land by reclamation, purchase, condemnation, taxation or otherwise; such land to be organized as rapidly as possible into socially operated farms for the conduct of collective agricultural enterprises.

4. Such farms should constitute educational and experimental centers for crop culture, the use of fertilizers and farm machinery and distributing points for improved seeds and better breeds of animals.

5. The formation of co-operative associations for agricultural purposes should be encouraged.

6. Insurance against diseases of animals and plants, insect pests and natural calamities should be provided by national, state and local governments.

7. We call attention to the fact that the elimination of farm tenantry and the development of socially owned and operated agriculture will open opportunities to the agricultural wage worker and to that extent free him from the tyranny of the private employer.

8. The Socialist party pledges its support to the renters and the agricultural wage workers in their attempts to organize to protect themselves from the aggressions of capitalism and the employers in agriculture.

While the above is offered as a general outline for the national agricultural program of the Socialist party, we wish to point out that there are such variations of conditions in the widely separated districts of the United States that to each section and to each state must be left the task of working out the further details of a program applicable to the peculiar agricultural conditions in their respective states and districts.\*

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\*Proceedings (1912), pp. 192-93.



**PLATFORM PLANK.**

The platform of the party, adopted at the same convention, contained a general plank calling for "the collective ownership of land wherever practicable, and in cases where such ownership is impracticable the appropriation by taxation of the annual rental value of all land held for speculation or exploitation."

**OKLAHOMA RENTERS' AND FARMERS' PROGRAM.**

The Socialists of Oklahoma were the first of any state (1910) to draft an agricultural program. The document, as amended in 1914, is as follows:

The Socialist party stands for every measure that will add to the material, intellectual and moral welfare of the working class, and as the working class of Oklahoma is largely made up of agricultural workers we submit the following as the renters' and farmers' program of the Socialist party of Oklahoma:

1. The retention and constant enlargement of the public domain—

By retaining school and other public lands;

By purchase of arid and overflow lands and the state reclamation of all such lands now held by the state or that may be acquired by the state;

By the purchase of all lands sold for the non-payment of taxes;

By the purchase of segregated and unallotted Indian lands;

By the retention of leased lands after the expiration of leases and the payment for the improvements thereon at an appraised valuation.

2. Separation of the department of agriculture from the political government by means of—

Election of all members and officers of the board of agriculture by the direct vote of the actual farmers—subject to the right of recall;

Introduction of the merit system among the employes.

3. Erection by the state of grain elevators and warehouses for the storage of farm products; these elevators

and warehouses to be managed by the board of agriculture.

4. Organization by the board of agriculture for free agricultural education and the establishment of model farms.

5. Encouragement by the board of agriculture of co-operative societies of farmers—

For the purchasing of land;

For the buying of seed and fertilizer;

For the purchase and common use of implements and machinery;

For the preparing and sale of produce.

6. Organization by the state providing for loans on mortgages and warehouse certificates, the interest charges to cover cost only.

7. State insurance against diseases of animals, diseases of plants, insect pests, hail, flood, storm and fire.

8. Exemption from taxation of dwellings, tools, farm animals, implements and improvements to the amount of one thousand dollars.

All lands held for exploitation or speculation to be taxed at their full rental value.

9. Land now in possession of the state or hereafter acquired through purchase, reclamation or tax sales, to be rented to landless farmers under the supervision of the board of agriculture at the prevailing rate of share rent or its equivalent. The payment of such rent to cease as soon as the total amount of rent paid is equal to the value of the land, the tenant thereby acquiring for himself and his children the right of occupancy. The title to all such lands remaining with the commonwealth.

## II.

**THE CONDITION AND THE REMEDY.****WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH THE FARMER?**

BY WALTER THOMAS MILLS.

One-half of the people of the United States live in the country. They are fishermen, miners, timbermen and farmers; most largely farmers.

They produce the raw materials from which all wealth is created.

They do more than one-half of all the work. They ought to get at least one-half of all the wealth created.

The other half of the people of the United States are mostly employed in transportation, in manufactures, storage, exchange, distribution and in professional services.

They do the other half of the work and ought to get the other half of all the wealth created.

There is a small minority of the people who render no useful services of any sort. They are the exploiters. An exploiter is one who, by any process, gets something for nothing or takes more than he gives.

The exploiters are only a handful of the people, but they take the larger share of all the wealth produced and they have complete control of industry, of commerce and of politics.

**EXPLOITERS TAKE THE LARGER SHARE.**

The exploiters are able to take the larger share of all the wealth created through their power as private owners of the land, the mines, the forests, the steamships, the railways, the great factories, the banks and markets. All these are controlled by the great private monopolies.

These monopolies fix the wages of hired labor and they fix the selling prices of farm products. They also fix the

charges for transportation, for storage, for manufactures, for exchange and for the private use of the public credit.

Human existence cannot be maintained without the use of these things and all these things are absolutely controlled by the exploiters. In this way, they are able to force down the prices which both the wage workers and farmers get and to force up the prices which both the wage workers and the farmers pay. Both farmers and wage workers take what they are offered and pay what they are asked.

The monopolies privately appropriate the difference. In this way, millionaires are made of the useless exploiters and paupers are made of the useful millions of the workers.

It is true that the working farmer may privately own his land, stock and tools, but he does not own the railways, warehouses, banks and markets. He cannot effectively use what he does own without also using the railways, banks and markets which he does not own. Both the town and the country workers are exploited, not through the private use of the things which they do own, but through the collective use of the things which they must use together but do not own together.

#### HOW THE WORKING FARMER GETS HIS WAGES.

The town worker gets his wages once a week and what he gets in his envelope is all wages.

The working farmer gets his wages—that is, his pay for his labor, once a year or when his crop is marketed. But out of the check, received for his crop, he must first deduct 7 per cent on his investment in land, stock and tools. Seven per cent is what he could get if he loaned his money to another farmer. Seven per cent is what he must get on his investment or he has made a bad bargain.

Out of his check, received for his crop, he must pay for repairs and purchases to keep up the efficiency of his stock and his farm equipment.

Out of his check, received for his crop, he must pay taxes, freight charges, commissions and the wages of the

labor he has been obliged to hire, or lose in a few days the fruits of a year of toil.

After he has made all these payments out of his check, received for his crop, what is still left is his wages. That is, it is the pay he gets for his and his family's toil.

These net returns to the working farmer are so very small that there are few average town workers willing to swap incomes with the average working farmer. These net returns are so small that year by year increasing numbers of farmers and of the sons and daughters of farmers are seeking the better jobs of the cities and towns with all the hazards that they involve for unskilled workers in the labor market.

#### WHAT THE FARMER LOSES.

If the farmer wants to know how badly he is exploited, let him bear in mind that the mine, forest and farm workers do one-half of all the work. Therefore, they ought to be able to sell their unmanufactured products for enough so that the net returns for their labor would buy one-half the finished goods produced from the materials supplied by them.

The other one-half, were it available for the purpose, would more than pay for all other services involved in finishing the processes of production and pay more than double the rate of wages now paid to all the other workers.

Now, when the farmer gets a woolen suit, he does not get one woolen suit for furnishing the wool from which to make two. He must furnish the wool out of which to make from five to a dozen suits in order to get one.

When he sells his cotton, for every fifteen cents he gets he pays from \$1.50 to \$2.50 for the same material when he gets it back over the counter as a finished product, after only twenty cents worth of other labor, at current wages, has been expended on it.

When he sells his wheat, he does not get one loaf for the wheat with which to make two loaves, but he must fur-

nish wheat enough to make from six to ten loaves for the one only which he is able to obtain in return.

If it is said that this is true because the town laborer gets too large a share, the answer is that the workers of the town are themselves exploited after the same manner.

If it is said that the country worker is not a skilled worker, then the answer is twofold. If he is not a skilled worker, whose fault is that, and then, which calls for the highest skill, the greatest care, the most constant attention and the widest knowledge—the management of an orchard, a grain farm or a stock ranch, on the one hand, or the work of a spinner, a weaver or the mill hand on the other?

If it is said that the cost of the equipment used by the town worker is greater than the cost of the equipment of the country worker, the answer is that the average cost of equipment for each man employed is higher for the farmer than for the general average of the factory, transportation or commercial worker.

The farmer does not lose because other workers are paid too much, nor for the lack of a sufficient investment. It is because he is robbed by private monopoly in land, in transportation, in manufactures and exchange, just as are all other workers.

#### WHAT THE FARMERS NEED.

Where, then, can the farmer look for deliverance? *He must join with all other workers, both in the town and country, in the demand for the collective ownership and management of all the great private monopolies.* Monopoly of some sort is the only power that can fix prices, regardless of the cost of production.

What the farmer needs is a chance to produce with the best possible equipment at the cost of producing that equipment, and the opportunity to dispose of his products and to buy his supplies in a market where both the prices which he gets when he sells and the prices which he pays when he buys are fixed solely and only by the cost of production.

Then his ability to take things out of the market would be measured only by his ability to put things into the market.

#### **WHAT THE TOWN WORKERS CAN GIVE THE FARMERS.**

If the country workers will join hands with the workers of the towns in the effort to escape from their exploiters, this is what the town workers can offer to the working farmers:

1. Transportation and storage at cost.
2. A public market both for his purchases and for his sales in which the private grafter would have no share.
3. Stock, tools and supplies at cost.
4. Farms for himself and for his children and for his children's children forever, at the cost of improvements, plus, say 5 per cent per annum on the value of the land aside from all improvements.

5. Through a system of public loans, the private use of the public credit necessary to carry on his enterprises and that at the cost of keeping the accounts and of covering unavoidable losses. The unavoidable losses would amount to practically nothing at all. The farmers' bank of West Australia, through a period of twenty years, has never lost a single penny in bad accounts.

It will be seen that in all of the above, what is offered the farmer is the opportunity to secure the things he needs as a producer and for his daily use at their actual cost to the community.

This would mean to the working farmer a permanent market for all his products, with prices more than double what he is getting now when he sells, and prices at less than one-half what he is paying now when he buys either land, stock, tools or family supplies, and that would mean an increase of more than four times over on his present actual family income.

#### **WHAT THE FARMERS CAN GIVE WORKERS OF THE TOWNS.**

If the city workers would support the working farmers in their effort to escape from those who would exploit them,

this is what the country workers could offer in return to the workers of the towns:

1. Homes at the actual cost of the buildings produced with the greatest economy, plus, say, 5 per cent per annum on the unimproved land values or again, at their actual cost to the community.

2. The private use of the public credit in securing such homes and that at the actual cost of keeping the accounts and covering unavoidable losses.

3. Shops, factories, mines, railways, steamships and markets with the best possible equipment and scientific management for the employment of all, with wages fixed by "the most one can produce," not by "the least on which he can exist."

4. Public markets where all their purchases can be made at cost with the private exploiter entirely excluded.

This again would more than double the wages, shorten the hours and get at one-half the price now paid, everything these workers buy. That would mean for the usual city worker an increase of more than four times over on his present actual family income.

#### UNION AND VICTORY.

The exploiters are able to exploit all the workers, both on the land and everywhere else, through their monopoly control. They are able to maintain this control only by keeping the workers voting against each other at the ballot box. Hence it is that none of the above advantages can be secured for any share of the workers except by a program which will at the same time secure them for all the workers.

No scheme can be devised by which these things can be obtained by the working farmers and have the mining, transport, manufacturing and commercial workers left out of the benefits. Neither can they be secured for these workers and the farmers be excluded.

With these workers divided, they must forever defeat and impoverish each other. With all workers united, the



power is at once in their own hands for their complete deliverance.

The whole class of useful workers must sink or swim together. Any other working class struggle is a struggle of only a part of the working class and cannot secure deliverance even for the part that struggles.

The private owners of land monopoly, shipping monopoly, railway monopoly, commercial monopoly and money monopoly are all combined to exploit the workers. The workers must all combine, not to exploit anyone, but to deliver all from exploitation. This can be done only through the public ownership and management of the means by which they are now exploited.

Secret combinations, corrupt political bargains, the corruption of courts, supporting the best man, even though he is supported also by those who use him through the worst of programs, have won much for the exploiter. But these things can bring nothing but disaster to the cause of labor.

Nothing can deliver labor but an open, honest union of all the workers to secure equal opportunity for all those who render useful services of any sort and to oppose everywhere and always exploitation of every kind.

#### WHICH SIDE IS YOURS?

That is what the Socialists propose to do.

That is how they propose to do it.

That is what millions of people are ready to help to do who have never called themselves "Socialists."

It is a matter of no consequence what you are called. It is a matter of world-wide and age-long importance what you do.

If you are ready to join hands with all the exploited to stop the world-wide wrong of exploitation, then join the only people who are trying to stop it and help to get it stopped.

This can be done only by establishing a public enter-

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\*The American Socialist, May 29, 1915.

prise in the place of every private monopoly, and that is Socialism.\*

### THE TEXAS FARM TENANTS.

One of the most important hearings of the Federal Commission on Industrial Relations was that held in Dallas, Texas, from the 16th to the 22d of March, 1915. At these sessions the commission made a thorough inquiry into the relations of tenants and farm owners in Texas and Oklahoma. Among the witnesses were Patrick Nagle, a noted Socialist lawyer of Kingfisher, Okla., and Arthur LeSueur, of North Dakota, then a member of the national executive committee of the Socialist party. An amazing condition of abject misery and destitution among the tenant farmers of these two states was revealed. The following account, published in the *APPEAL*, vividly contrasts the personality and the testimony of an impoverished tenant with those of an opulent landlord and banker:

Those wise folks who say there are no classes in America should have attended the United States Industrial Relations Commission hearings at Dallas. They should have been in the audience that second day when a banker-landlord (born into that class) was followed on the stand by a tenant farmer family (born into that class).

The banker-landlord was R. W. Getzendaner, 39 years old, official of the Citizens' National bank of Waxahachie, Texas, and owner of 3,500 acres in Ellis county. He finished his education at the University of Virginia, went into his father's bank immediately the university course was completed and inherited the 3,500 acres at his father's death. He was well educated, well dressed and self-possessed. He has never known want, cold, hunger or fear of poverty.

### HOW TENANT FARMERS LIVE.

Levi T. Steward, the tenant farmer, and his family have practically no education, own not one inch of ground and have never entered a bank except to assume or pay off a

mortgage. After years and years of productive work they find themselves more heavily in debt than when they started. The best educated members of the family can barely read; most of them can neither read nor write. Their clothes were tatters and the children were barefoot in the middle of winter. From the moment each member of this family entered life he has been robbed, exploited and figured as a unit of profit or loss by some member of the owning class.

The banker-landlord claimed no credit for his position, and the tenant farmer family did not complain. Each was born into the sphere in which he found himself; neither knew anything different, and all accepted the arrangement as a matter of course. They were simply members of different classes—classes created by a system that robs one set of humans for the benefit of another set of humans.

Getzendaner declared there was no profit in renting land to tenants. He produced figures to show that his profit was but 4.3 per cent. He admitted that tenants must plant what and when the landlord decided, but denied that landlords had any superior bargaining power over rents. When asked his opinion of the relation between landlord and tenant he declared that landlords were "no more oppressive than other business men—not so much so."

#### VAGRANCY LAWS FIX WAGES.

In this county the commercial clubs have a habit of enforcing vagrancy laws to compel negroes to pick cotton—at a rate of pay set by the commercial club. Last year the negroes wanted 60 cents a hundred pounds for picking; when they refused 50 cents a hundred the vagrancy laws were set upon them and they had to work at that figure or leave the county.

"Do you think the law should be used in that way?" asked Chairman Walsh. "As I understand, it's either a case of the cotton picker accepting the terms or going to jail as a vagrant."

"They don't have to do either," replied Getzendaner. "They can get out. There's plenty of work."

"You mean plenty of work at that price, don't you?" asked Walsh.

"It's better money than they can make at anything else," defended the banker-landlord.

He declared that he knew no defects in the present arrangement between landlord and tenant that could be remedied by law. He admitted that the condition of tenant farmers was not what he thought it should be, but said much could be accomplished by school teachers and preachers instructing the people how to produce more.

#### A TYPICAL TENANT FAMILY.

A gasp went round the room when the Steward family entered. None of them wore wraps, and several of the six children were barefoot. The day was bitterly cold. Mrs. Steward carried a three-year-old child.

The family history is one long fight with poverty. The couple married in Arkansas in 1887. Eleven babies have come into the home. On three such occasions there was no doctor in attendance. The family was too poor. Three of the children have died. Ora Vivian had congestion for four days before death claimed her in her third year. Mary Bula died at nine months. Cause unknown. Willie Joe was but five months old when his little body grew cold as he lay by his mother's side and he joined his brother and sister—three baby victims of poverty.

#### THE LOSING FIGHT.

The father related his fight year by year since marriage. The story of each season was exactly like the other with slight variation. He testified that he never drank liquor, never kept it in the house, even for medicinal purposes, and the family did not squander money for fine clothes. His wife never had a ready-made suit in all her life and but three "store" hats. She had but one "trip" in

her life, and that was when she took advantage of excursion rates to travel a distance of 100 miles. They lived within a few miles of Conway, Texas, for two years and his wife was to town but once in all that time; that was when he carried her there to be attended by a doctor. The general history was summed up in the statement that the family has "made" approximately 700 bales of cotton and hundreds of bushels of corn in the last twenty-eight years and now finds itself illiterate, hopeless and about \$750 in debt.

#### A GENEROUS MORTGAGE HOLDER.

Steward told of the latest blow, one that had fallen but a few weeks before. For purchases made early in the season he gave chattel mortgages on all his household furniture, one farm implement and six live hogs. The war knocked the bottom from cotton and, finding himself unable to meet the mortgage, he wrote the mortgagee that he would be obliged to turn over the above collateral. Imagine his surprise when he received a warm personal letter in reply telling him he need not worry about the mortgage; that the war had made it impossible for farmers to get good prices and the collateral could remain in his hands until prosperity returned and he could pay off the notes. The most important piece of household furniture was a sewing machine upon which Mrs. Steward made clothes for the family. They had expected to go through the winter without this, but when the welcome news came the mother broke down and cried for joy. The six hogs were probably the most important item of all, for they represented the difference between starvation for the family and meat enough for the winter.

Enthused by the generosity of the mortgagee, Steward set to work to fatten his hogs for killing. The corn he had raised and expected to sell was fed to the swine instead. Killing time came. They were butchered, home cured and put away. The family was at least secure against actual starvation.

**BUSINESS IS BUSINESS.**

And then the unexpected happened. The mortgagee descended in due legal form and took from the family its household goods, sewing machine included, and appropriated the cured meat of the six hogs. Not until then did the Stewards understand the game. Had the mortgagee claimed his collateral when first offered him he would have had to fatten and kill the hogs himself. But by pretending to aid the stricken family he not only got all that his notes called for, but the season's production of corn fed to the hogs and the family's labor in killing and preparing them.

That was his game when he deliberately crawled into their confidence by promising not to foreclose. The human hyena calculated the whole thing—and worked it to a successful conclusion. And yet some people deny the existence of the class struggle and of hell. The Steward family's experience demonstrates both.

**STORE BILL EQUALS INCOME.**

The annual grocery and "supply" bill generally totaled around \$300. But in the one "good" year when crops were plenteous and prices high—the once in a lifetime that the family had a chance to escape from debt—the "store bill" mounted to \$1,700. Steward explained this by saying the storekeeper was the son-in-law of his landlord. The son-in-law knew about what the tenant would have coming to him—and the bill was of such amount as to exactly wipe out the family's earnings. When the father protested he was told that his children had traded out the increased amount in soda water, tobacco, etc.

"Did the children do that?" asked Mr. Walsh.

"They say they didn't," answered Steward, "and anyway, I'd done tol' th' store man not to sell 'em on credit. He said he wouldn't."

When the father asked for an itemized bill he found hundreds of dollars charged up to "merchandise."

**HE IS GOOD DEMOCRAT.**

Steward declared he had voted the democratic ticket every time he cast a ballot. He admitted having read the *APPEAL* several times, but it made no impression on him. He was never in court in all his life, never accused of violating the law and has never sued or been sued. He is sober, industrious and upright. But he has never been able to overcome the class handicap with which he was born into the world.

Steward's testimony called forth bitter controversy and savage comment from defenders of the system. They declared that the commission was unfair in bringing such a case to public notice and repeatedly announced that it was the "worst case in Texas." But witness after witness testified that the case was typical, not exceptional, and one witness offered to reproduce the Steward family by the hundred if the commission would pay their fares to Dallas.

**LANDLORD HELPS TENANT.**

Two days after the Stewards testified the commission received a letter from Getzendaner offering to give the family a new start on his place. The offer was accepted, for father, mother and children were destitute to the last degree.

One of these men was born into the propertied class. He could not help it. The other man was born into the propertyless class. He could not help it. Just as the system decreed that one should go to the university and the counting house, so it decreed that the other should be denied an education and remain a tenant under the system.\*

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\*Appeal to Reason, April 17, 1915.

## THE OKLAHOMA RENTERS.

At the same hearings before the Industrial Relations Commission Patrick Nagle testified at length regarding farm conditions in Oklahoma. The account given below is the substance of this testimony, published, with an introduction by H. M. Sinclair, state secretary of the Socialist party of Oklahoma, in the *American Socialist*. In his introductory statement Mr. Sinclair gives this comment on the testimony:

"The point made is that the farmer (unless he is a 'side liner') is passing from the stage of action. The statement that 80 per cent of the actual farmers of the state are mortgaged has been challenged, reference being made to the United States census of 1910. That census was taken five years ago, and we have passed through five years of partial failures. The cotton and corn crops were almost a total failure in 1913 and we had 6-cent cotton in 1914. And besides it has been only since 1908 that the lands to any considerable extent could be mortgaged in that part of the state formerly known as the Indian Territory.

"Within the last sixty days the records in the office of the register of deeds in one of the richest counties of the state have been carefully checked and it was found that 78½ per cent of the lands owned by actual farmers were mortgaged. But it was also found that 5 per cent of the farmers who had no mortgage on their land had chattel mortgages on record against them."

BY PATRICK NAGLE.

The first opening of lands for settlement in Oklahoma was on April 22, 1889. A tract of about 2,000,000 acres was thrown open for settlement on that date by virtue of an executive order. More than 100,000 people entered Oklahoma on that day.

By virtue of an act of congress in 1890, "No Man's Land" was added, which is a strip of land 167 miles long and 34½ miles wide.

September 19, 1891, the lands of the Iowa, Sac, Fox and Pottawatomie Indians were opened for settlement.

April 19, 1892, the lands of the Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians, being 4,297,771 acres, were opened for settlement.

September 16, 1893, the Cherokee Strip, comprising 6,014,293, was opened for settlement.



May 23, 1893, the lands of the Kickapoos, comprising 206,662 acres, were opened for settlement.

August 6, 1901, the Kiowa, Comanche, Apache and Wichita reservations, comprising about 4,000,000 acres, were opened for settlement.

The Otoe, Ponca, Missouri and Kaw reservations were opened in 1904.

In 1906, which I believe was the last opening, 600,000 acres, comprising lands in the Comanche and Apache reservations, were sold in 160-acre pieces to the highest bidder.

#### LANDS TO ACTUAL SETTLERS.

Now, the point I wish to make is that all of those lands except the last mentioned and the Kiowa, Comanche and Wichita lands, passed to the citizen settler of the United States under the homestead law and by virtue of what was known as the "Free Homes bill;" the lands passed to them free except the ordinary filing fee, amounting to some \$15 or \$20, which was paid at the United States land offices.

There are 78 counties in Oklahoma. Of these approximately 70 are purely agricultural. In the state there are approximately 20,000,000 acres. In the eastern part of the state, or what was formerly the Indian Territory, approximately two-thirds of the farmers are renters. In the western part of the state, formerly known as the Territory of Oklahoma, one-third of the farmers are renters and two-thirds own their own land.

The number of renters in the state at this time is 104,000, an increase of almost 11,000 since 1911. All are chattel mortgaged.

Of the farmers that own their own farms, 80 per cent are mortgaged, the first mortgages ranging from 40 to 60 per cent of the cash value of the land. How the 20 per cent escaped being mortgaged I will explain hereafter.

#### IN WESTERN OKLAHOMA.

The conditions of the farmer and renter in the western part of the state, or rather in that part of the state formerly

known as Oklahoma Territory, are better than in the eastern part of the state, formerly known as the Indian Territory.

Yet, it is apparent from the foregoing statement that the farmers in that part of the state formerly known as Oklahoma Territory, notwithstanding the fact that they obtained their land from the government free, are today one-third renters, and 80 per cent of the other two-thirds are mortgaged. What brought about these conditions? The first territorial legislature enacted a law that the 80 acres of the homestead upon which the residence was situated could not be mortgaged. The cry was raised by the bankers that this would prevent capital from coming into the state and prevent the farmer from obtaining money to properly operate the farm. The law was repealed, and the loan agent made his appearance. In 1894, 1895 and 1896 the rate of interest was 7 per cent and 30 per cent commission on loans made for a period of six years. This means that the farmer gave a first mortgage for \$1,000 drawing 7 per cent interest, payable semi-annually, and he gave a second mortgage for \$300, payable in one and two years without interest. The rate has gradually fallen until at the present time it ranges from 6 per cent to 5 per cent interest and 20 per cent commission.

The farmer mortgages for one of two reasons: First, dire necessity; second, because he knows that he must have working capital or pass to the renter class, and to avoid this he takes chances.

#### A NEW YORK SURVEY.

Cornell University, from its college of agriculture, issued "An Agricultural Survey of Tompkins County, New York." This is a 200-page pamphlet by G. E. Warren and K. C. Livermore. The survey of conditions in Tompkins county was worked out after four seasons of exhaustive investigation covering every detail of farming.

This survey discloses that the wages of a farm hand in that region were from \$300 to \$350 a year, with house

rent, garden, wood and milk added. The survey shows that one-third of the owners of land made less than the hired men, one-third about the same and one-third made more.

The problem of the survey was to disclose why the few succeeded and the many did so poorly. The survey solved the problem. It found, for example, that more than one-third of the owners had invested capital of less than \$4,000. These were the ones who averaged profits of less than the hired man's wages. Those with a capital of \$10,000 averaged a good labor income.

The survey discloses that in spite of the most energetic and economic management, only one farmer out of 236 with a capital of less than \$4,000 was able to reach a labor income of \$800 a year. "Shortage of capital," declared the pamphlet, "is the cause of poor results in farming."

The average size of the farm in Tompkins county is 107 acres. The owner with more than 100 acres averaged much more than wages. The owner with less than 61 acres made less than wages. The chief reason given for this is the economy of operation made possible by machinery. There must be land enough to keep the machinery in use; otherwise the capital invested in the labor-saving devices does not yield the proper returns.

The conclusion therefore is reached in this illuminating survey that to farm successfully a farmer needs at least 150 acres of land in his own right, and ought to have 200 acres.

#### "SHORTAGE OF CAPITAL" AND PARASITES.

As in New York so it is in Oklahoma. "Shortage of capital" is gradually submerging the farmer. But why this shortage of capital? The why is because the farmer is unable to accumulate. And why is he unable to accumulate? He is unable to accumulate because the burden he carries is too heavy. And what is this burden? To illustrate what this burden is, I will take a county in central Oklahoma—one of the best counties in the state, well wat-

ered, fairly well timbered and a county in which can be grown corn, wheat and cotton and traversed by railway lines.

The conditions in the county I now describe are the conditions in every agricultural county in the state. In this county there are 3,000 farmers; 1,000 are renters and 2,000 own their own farms. Of the 2,000 that own their own farms, 80 per cent are mortgaged.

There is no mining or manufacturing in this county. The wealth produced in this county comes solely from the labor of these 3,000 farmers and their families. In this county is a county seat town and two other "electric light" towns.

In these "electric light" towns are grouped approximately 100 parasites of the first degree. This means that every 30 farmers must keep one parasite of the first degree in affluence. They must furnish him with a first-class house to live in, with servants and all the trappings of middle-class fashionable life. These parasites are interlocked. Their conscious identity of interest as a whole against the interest of the producing farmers in the county as a whole, welds them together. If the bank that exploits the farmer through usury should decry the graft of the grain man, what would happen? The grain man would counter with the charge of usury graft and withdraw his deposits from the bank and report the matter to the secretary and executive committee of the State Grain Dealers' association, and this committee would take the matter up with the bank's correspondents in Kansas City, Chicago and New York and the bank would be refused accommodations and would eventually be forced out of business. The banker may be a good man, but caution impels him to silence and to mind his own business.

#### AN INTERLOCKING GRAFT SYSTEM.

If the big dry goods merchant should complain of the grafting on the farmer by the mills, elevators, grain and

lumber men, or by the banks, how much goods do you think he would sell to the wives and families of these other parasites? If he whispered about usury, what would the banks do to him when he wanted money to discount his bills?

Nor is this all. The same 30 farmers that must support one parasite of the first degree must support many parasites of the second, third and fourth degrees. The bank that directly exploits the farmer by usurious interest is a parasite of the first degree. The newspaper man who advertises the bank and makes its business appear respectable to the public, is a parasite of the second degree; he feeds on the banker. The landlord who rents the building to the newspaper man is a parasite of the third degree; he feeds on the newspaper man. The insurance agent who insures the landlord's building is a parasite of the fourth degree; he feeds on the landlord. All parasites of the first degree have a string of parasites attached to them and feeding on them. In the last analysis, however, they all feed on the farmer.

After these local interlocked parasites take their "cut" from the products raised by the farmer's toil, it is passed on to the "higher-ups," who operate through interlocking directorates.

#### LIKE PEONS AND SERFS.

This is the burden the farmer carries and it is this burden that is gradually reducing him to the status of the peon and the serf. These parasites of the first degree are virtual autocrats in their little kingdoms.

They control the press. The newspapers in the "electric light" towns are very careful not to publish anything that might enlighten the farmer as to the inner workings of these interlocked groups. The papers depend upon advertising. The farmer does not advertise—the parasite does.

They control the church. These interlocked parasites distribute themselves around among the various churches

of the town and if the minister should denounce their methods they would withdraw their support and influence, and he would soon be relieved of his charge.

They control the schools. The high school or grade teacher dares not speak of the ruthless exploitation of the farmer. If she expects to be advanced in her profession, or become county superintendent of schools, she must hold up the parasite to the rising generation as a living exemplar of the "good man."

The lawyers and politicians are used as buffers between the farmer and the parasite. They stand in with the parasite, but they hand out to the farmer in the country school houses "bunk" and soporific "dope." And in this they are aided by the newspaper man.

#### THE FEW WHO ESCAPE MORTGAGING.

Five per cent of the farmers who own their own land escaped mortgaging by reason of the fact that they or their wives inherited money from estates and were thus enabled to tide over.

This accounts for 85 per cent. Now, how did the other 15 per cent escape mortgaging?

It is not every one who bawls, "We farmers, we farmers," and wears the uniform that is entitled to the name.

There are what might be called "side-line farmers" and they may be scheduled about as follows—I may not name them all:

(a) Side liner No. 1 rides over the country picking up a calf here, a colt there and a mule somewhere else, cheap. His special prey is the poor devil who has no credit, no telephone and takes no newspapers.

(b) Side liner No. 2 has his weather eye out for chattel mortgage sales, sheriff's sales of land, and picks up "equities" from real farmers who are "squeezed out."

(c) Side liner No. 3 raises jacks and stable horses at a cost of \$100 each and sells them to a company of farm-

ers in a neighboring county for \$200 each, after fixing two or three of the company by giving them their "share" and a \$50 William to boot. This thrifty gentleman assumes the cognomen of "farmer and stockman."

(d) Side liner No. 4 is another thrifty gentleman who wears the uniform and whose business is "skinning niggers and Indians," or who receives a commission as a capper.

(e) Side liner No. 5 is the "retired farmer" who lives in the country, owns two or three quarter sections and makes his tenants "divide up" with him from one-fourth to one-half.

(f) Side liner No. 6 is the landlord-farmer and the banker-farmer, many of whom live in the country "among their tenants." These are the humane Christian gentlemen who, before they sign the double-riveted lease, make strict inquiry, not only as to the "mule power," but as to the "force" of the prospective tenant—their age, number and health. The "force" means the wife and children of the tenant farmer.

These side liners constitute the other 15 per cent that have escaped the mortgage. They stand in with the "electric town" parasites and make common cause with them against the real farmer.

#### WHO IS THE REAL FARMER?

Now, who is the real farmer? The tenant farmer is the real farmer, and the man who owns the land and lives on it, works it and produces those things which the race must have in order to survive, is the real farmer. The tragedy of the situation is that although he is the man that must produce the things if the race survives, it is apparent that his status is rapidly changing and that under the existing order he can survive only as a peon and a serf. That which he raises on the soil he takes to the "electric light" town and lays it at the feet of the parasites, and they fix the price. He takes their check and cashes it and goes back

into their places of business and buys from them and again they fix the price. The only thing that is necessary for the producing farmer to know is the road to town. The market, so far as he is concerned, is a shell game and operated in a way that he is ever flim-flammed and buncoed.

Heretofore it has been impossible to enslave the American producing farmer for the same reason that it was impossible to enslave the Indian. He escaped to the woods. But the public domain is exhausted. He is face to face with a crisis. He must accept one or two alternatives. He must in the future be contented and docile as a peon and a serf or he must crush the power of the parasite class.

The farmer, single handed and alone, forced his way across a wilderness from the Atlantic to the Pacific, contending not only with the forces of nature, but with wild beasts and wilder men. He overcame every obstacle and conquered every foe until he met the trust. Although in this conflict he has been whipped in every round, yet all the rounds have not been fought and his fighting spirit is unbroken.

Anything a man can whip, he will whip, and anything he can't whip, he will worship. The farmer will not worship the trust—he will fight again. And before he can reach for the throat of the trust, he must crush the middle men—the interlocked parasites of the “electric light” towns.\*

### **BANKS AND THE FARMER.**

BY ARTHUR LeSUEUR.

No more important hearing or public action has been had in the United States for a century than the land ownership or national land policy hearing held March 16 to 22 in Dallas, Texas, under the able leadership of Frank P. Walsh, chairman of the Commission on Industrial Relations.

Patrick Nagle, Socialist, of Kingfisher, Okla., showed

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\*The American Socialist, April 17, 1915.



the details of the parasitism practiced by the "electric light" towns upon the farmers.

He gave in detail all the particulars of the "business robbery" practiced upon the farmers by the business men, from the banker to the retailer, the manufacturer to the market manipulator.

He showed how the process works so that the daughters of the tenants go through the school of hard knocks, beginning with service in the household of the parasite, from there to the hotel, from there to the cheap restaurant and from there to the "electric light" town bawdy house and from there to the great city hell.

Many witnesses, including the governor of Texas, testified to the character of the "shacks" occupied by the tenants, as being unfit for human habitation.

Landlords were on hand with proof in plenty to show that the houses were as good as they could afford to furnish.

#### HUMOR OF THE TRAGEDY.

The grim humor about this tragedy is that most of the proof offered along these lines was absolutely true.

The tenants were honest; their plight is a tragedy that puts Ireland in its darkest days in the shade for real horror.

Most of the landlords are honest; they cannot help the tenants to any appreciable extent. This, of course, does not mean that they are not parasites pure and simple, for they are. But it does mean that they cannot live upon the toil of the real farmers and still allow the tenants to have decent homes, etc. But this result does not come because of the lack of sufficient crops to keep the landlords as parasites as well as to allow the tenants to have good homes, for the crops on the average are ample for that purpose.

Where, in the process of exchange, does the tenant farmer and the landlord lose the wealth the land produces?

#### BANKERS HARVEST THE PRODUCT.

The following figures are illuminating on the subject of who "comes home with the goods." Compare the total

wheat and cotton crop with the average annual increase of the resources of the banks.

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| In 1914 the United States produced wheat at \$1 |                |
| per bushel, of a total value of .....           | \$ 911,000,000 |
| Cotton at \$45 per bale, same year .....        | 760,448,560    |

|                              |                 |
|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Total cotton and wheat ..... | \$1,671,448,560 |
|------------------------------|-----------------|

Remember, that cotton and wheat are the two great staples of agriculture in the United States and that the 1914 crop was the largest crop ever produced in the United States.

Averaging the annual increase of resources of the banks of the United States for four years ending June 14, 1912, as shown by the report of the comptroller of the currency for the latter year, we find that it is \$1,350,808,329.50 for each of these four years.

In other words, the annual increase of the resources of the reporting banks, which is about 3,000 short of the total number of banks in the United States, is nearly equal to the total production of both wheat and cotton.

#### GET THE LION'S SHARE.

This shows plainly who it is that walks off with the lion's share of the product of the farms.

There are about 6,000,000 farmers in the United States.

There are about 30,000 banks in the United States.

The above annual increase of resources of the banks is in addition to the fancy salaries that thousands of bankers enjoy, and for which they do nothing but own banks. It is also in addition to the comfortable salaries that all of the bankers and their employes enjoy. If this were known and added to the increase of resources it would at least equal the total production of wheat and cotton compared with the largest crop in history.

The farmers as a class must transact their business through the banks, either directly or through some of the other parasites that live upon the wealth produced by the

farmers. This in the main is done on credit and must be so done as there is no other means by which to do it.

The magnitude of the credit business may be sensed by the bank clearings, which for 1914 amounted to nearly, if not quite, two hundred billion dollars.

On every bit of this the banks make a profit, small, to be sure, on the individual transactions, but amounting in the aggregate to the stupendous sums we have named.

Business of all kinds, as well as farming, must be done largely on credit, for cash is non-existent so far as the farmer is concerned.

Regulative laws bring no relief to this intolerable condition, for economic laws brook no interference, and ownership and control are inseparable.

The legislative acts of the representatives of the public, made by lawyers and bankers in the main, are simply in their results, a machine made to hold the farmer and wage worker, while the aristocracy of wealth picks their pockets, making this a safe and legal procedure.

#### HERE IS THE REMEDY.

The remedy for this is partly in political and partly in economic or industrial action. Co-operation on the industrial field by the farmers, backed up by political action, is the open sesame.

Industrial co-operative action to control the produce of the land, as well as the land itself. Political action to clear away the infamous legal restrictions that prevent successful industrial co-operation by the serfs of the land.

Banks have the active co-operation of the government, both state and national, in order to safeguard and protect their interests, while the farmers are even denied the right to legally exist in a real industrial or economic co-operative. The farmers are denied the right to use their own credit without first paying tribute to the banks.

The farmers have the most extensive and the most solid basis for credit of any class in the world, their taxing

power, but are denied the right under the law to use this power for their own benefit.

This is part of the machinery that holds the farmer while the banker picks his pocket.

The remedy lies through a combination of political and industrial action. This is well illustrated by the success of the Saskatchewan, Canada, municipal hail insurance, which has driven every old line hail insurance company out of the province and reduced the cost of hail insurance to the farmers more than 60 per cent.

This was accomplished because of the use of the power of the state in assisting the economic power of the farmers themselves.

This was accomplished by a law allowing the farmers to levy a tax instead of a private contract, to cover the premium necessary to pay the hail losses, and resulted in reducing the cost to the actual expense of operating the hail insurance business on the part of the farmers, so that the total cost to them was reduced over 60 per cent.

On the matter of the credit necessary to the farmers, they can accomplish at least as large a percentage of saving, through being allowed by law to back their collective credit with the taxing power of the state. This should be done by the establishment of public banks, established through national law, rather than through state action, but state action would relieve to a degree from the enormous legal robbery practiced by the bankers. The principle is the same as in the hail insurance law used in Saskatchewan.

The farmer does not want to own land for the privilege of paying taxes upon it, but for the purpose of producing usable wealth. Even the land owner today cannot individually control the product of his land, and it is the product that counts even more than the title to the land itself. Product, in other words, is what the farmer needs, in order to educate and house and feed a family.\*

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\*The American Socialist, April 3, 1915.

## III.

**STEPS TOWARD THE SOCIALIST GOAL.**

BY A. M. SIMONS.

All that is said hereafter regarding the future is merely in the way of possible and probable lines of social evolution. The suggestions that are made are in no way parts of a hard and fast scheme which must be championed by Socialists and which would be followed by them if elected, regardless of consequences or the course of economic development. The philosophy and program of Socialism is nothing more nor less than a series of deductions from observed social facts. As soon as any new social facts shall appear it must admit them into its premises and if necessary modify its conclusions. But the ability of interpretation which enabled the Socialists to foretell the disappearance of the competitive system from the time of its birth, entitles them to speak with more than ordinary authority concerning the future. All that has been said here is but the logical deduction from present conditions and is but the probable course of development. I think, however, that everyone who stops to consider the matter at all will agree that this future is infinitely preferable to the present and that it is worthy every effort that can be made to hasten its coming.

**THE FIRST STEP—TO GAIN POWER.**

The question, then, of the greatest importance is, "What steps are necessary to aid this process of social evolution?"

Enough has already been said to show that the first step must be the organization of the farmers and the wage workers into a political party for the purpose of gaining control of the powers of government. Until this is done, and the government is actually in the control of the pro-

ducers, the farmers and wage workers are little interested in governmental actions.

Once that the government is so controlled—once, in short, that the Socialists are in power (and they can scarcely be expected to accomplish much before)—they can use that government, state, national or local, in the interest of the creators of wealth. For the first time in history there will be an opportunity for an intelligent choice as to the measures most desirable for the common good. Today the one question of paramount importance in every governing body is not how can goods be produced with the least amount of human exertion, but how can the largest amount of profits be made to accrue to the capitalist class.

Whatever action may be taken by a Socialist government concerning the great industrial plants, there will be no need or sense in forcible expropriation of the average farmer. As we have already seen, all that he practically owns is a "job," and no Socialist government would want to take that away from him. Whatever land is in the possession of the present government will certainly not be alienated by any Socialist government.

#### STATE NOW OWNS VAST TRACTS.

Now it so happens that a very large percentage of the land which would be of most value to a co-operative society is in the possession of the present capitalist government. These lands have been of such a nature as not to be capable of exploitation by the individual farmer and hence have not been utilized at all. This is especially true of the arid lands. Millions of acres of the most fertile lands in America lie still untouched by the plow or even surveyor's chain, awaiting the time when adequate irrigation works can be constructed. But already private capitalists are seeking to gain possession of these lands that they may use them as a means for the exploitation of a future generation of farmers. They are urging the present government, controlled by their class, to construct irrigation works, whose benefit

will accrue only to a few great landholders. Proper control of river floods will make available vast tracts of alluvial land, which having been practically created by the community, will at once, without any form of law, become the property of the collectivity. The something over eight million acres of forest land controlled by the present state and national governments will form the foundation for a future department of forestry.

#### VACANT LANDS IN URBAN DISTRICTS.

Around every large city there are great tracts of vacant land held purely as a means of appropriating the increased value arising from the toil of others. The owners of this land, even less than the ordinary industrial capitalist, have not given the slightest consideration for the enormous values which such possession indicates. Their possession of these tracts, by restricting the expansion of the city dwellers, compels the overcrowding of the city population in murderous tenements. That a Socialist government would permit this condition to endure for a single hour is inconceivable. The expropriation of these owners will give the territory necessary for the sewage farming described in the previous chapter.

These routes offer a natural and reasonable course of evolution by which the co-ordination discussed in the preceding chapter may be attained. In each of the various fields of agriculture there described it would be possible to begin co-operative industry as soon as the necessary governmental machinery should be in the hands of the workers. As all the most improved methods of production would be used and the entire product would go to the producers, it is evident that, if there is any advantage in production upon a large scale, laborers in these industries would at once receive a many-fold larger reward than the "owner" of a little mortgage-ridden farm. Under these conditions it would not be long until such farmers would be anxious for a

chance to surrender that shadow of private property in order to grasp the substance of the increased returns of socialized industry.

#### THE EXTENT OF COLLECTIVE OWNERSHIP.

How far the process of collective ownership would proceed I cannot attempt to say. I believe that ultimately the greater economy and superiority of collective operation will induce nearly all individual farm owners to ask to share its benefits. Some things at least are certain. No wage laborers would remain upon private farms, when by entering into the co-operative industry they could receive all their labor created. This would at once wipe out the bonanza farms upon the one hand and on the other would give full opportunity for the sons and daughters of the present generation of farmers to look forward to something more than industrial slavery.

The same effect would be produced upon all rented and mortgaged farms. Those who were working upon these would decline to give up any portion of their product when by going upon the collectively owned farm they could receive it all. The landlords and mortgage owners would find their property of no value because it would no longer have the power to take a portion of other people's product. They would either be compelled to work their farms themselves or surrender them to the collectivity to be operated co-operatively. As the first alternative is impossible, it follows that the Socialist government would soon find itself in possession of all the land needed.

#### EXPERIENCE WILL DECIDE.

Socialists are bound by no fixed formula, plan or doctrine. Co-operative ownership of capital is advocated only because it is the logical conclusion of concentration and monopoly in industry, and so far as we can see today offers the only possible means of abolishing capitalism. If further economic development shall show that there are fields



of industry in which concentration is not economical and in which exploitation can be abolished and production furthered by the retention of private ownership in certain instruments of production, such retention is in no way at variance with the principles of the Socialist philosophy.

Indeed, there are some fields of production in which it is self-evident that such ownership will be retained. No sane man ever dreamed that the brushes of the artist, the pen of the author or the studios in which they work need ever become public property. The acquirement of the instruments of production and distribution by the collectivity is for the purpose of increasing the product and stopping exploitation and not to satisfy the exigencies of any scheme of social reconstruction.

#### ELIMINATION OF MIDDLEMEN.

A government which would be representative of the interests and ideas of the producers of wealth would, naturally, use all its powers for the benefit of the class it represented. Such a government would, of course, at once arrange for the collective ownership of the means of transportation, storage and distribution of goods. This would mean the complete disappearance of all middlemen, and the laborer of the collectively owned factory and mine would deal directly with the laborer of the farm. That this would mean a great improvement in the condition of both farmer and industrial worker needs no argument to prove. A Socialist organization of society would extend its educational functions far beyond what any government whose perpetuation depends in no small degree upon the ignorance of the citizens, would dare to do. Education would be adapted to further the interests of the producers and not for the purpose of introducing ideas in the promulgation of which the ruling class have a direct personal interest.

The present agricultural department of the government would be vastly extended and transformed into an agent for the common work of the entire agricultural class. A part

of its work would be to gather not market, but crop reports. Estimates would be prepared from these of the amount and character of the kind of crops to be raised, and information would be sent out as to where those crops could be most advantageously raised. It is probable that it would be found advisable for the farmers in their collective capacity as a government to at once bear the burdens of climatic calamities to crops rather than to let these fall upon the shoulders of individuals. A vast number of the worst calamities could be entirely obviated by intelligent co-operative action. . . . With these preventable calamities disposed of and the loss from the others spread over so large a number of persons as to be inappreciable to the individual, most of the uncertainty of the farmer's life and the suffering that comes from it will disappear.

#### CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES.

Considerable can undoubtedly be accomplished by the formation of co-operative societies for both production and distribution of goods. The story of the work of the Grange in this respect has already been told. But the failure of co-operatives has been to some extent due to the lack of any cohesive force to give them continuity as well as to the hostile environment in which they must struggle for existence. Co-operation at the present time is sporadic in its effects and uncertain in its results. Frequently a successful co-operative enterprise is struck down by the existence of a powerful privately owned competitor that can afford to do business temporarily at a loss for the sake of the long period of exploitation that is to follow.

In Denmark and Belgium, where the Socialists are already very strong, they have developed the co-operative system among farmers until they have been relieved of many of the more direct effects of exploitation. So far has this gone in Denmark that recent reports state that co-operative slaughter houses are now successfully competing with the packing houses of Chicago in the London markets. The

full importance of this will be realized when it is understood that all other private competitors in Europe or in America have been forced out of that market by Chicago meat packers.

There are a great number of other directions in which it is probable that a Socialist government could act during the time that would intervene before society could be wholly reorganized upon a co-operative basis. I do not offer these as definite fixed points in a program, but only as some suggestive lines of thought. Some of them doubtless are impracticable, some of them may be realized under capitalism with very little benefit to the farmer; none of them alone would wholly relieve the farmer from his dependence upon the exploiting class.

#### FUTILITY OF CERTAIN PROPOSED REFORMS.

I have not mentioned any of those reforms whose main tendency would be to increase the value of land or in any way to confirm the farmer in his present isolated position as an individualistic producer, because I not only do not believe that his escape from his present condition lies in that direction, but on the contrary am certain that all such movements but tend to perpetuate his slavery. Any movement, for example, of good roads, cheaper rural transportation, government loaning of money on farm mortgages, increase of circulation medium, etc., could have at the best nothing more than the most temporary effect upon the condition of the farmer. . . .

It is only through a close union on the political field of the entire laboring forces of society upon a program in accord with social evolution that anything lasting and effective can be done to better the condition of the workers either of farm or factory. Until this fact is realized, both are destined to remain in a greater or less degree of servitude to those who are the industrial and political rulers of present society.\*

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\*"The American Farmer," pp. 199-208.

## IV.

## FACTS FOR FARMERS.

BY ALLAN L. BENSON.

Farmers and their wives and children work too hard and get too few of the things in this world that are worth while. It is not necessary to tell farmers this. They know it. The only question worth considering is: *Is there any remedy for this condition?* Any Republican politician will tell you there is a remedy and that he has it. Any Democratic or Progressive politician will tell you the same. The remedy of each of these gentlemen is to put somebody out of office and put him in.

For a hundred years and more, American farmers have been trying to improve their condition by putting somebody out of office to put somebody else in. The plan has not worked well for the simple reason that the men who were put out and the men who were put in stood for much the same thing. Neither class of politicians was willing to get at and do away with the things that really keep the farmer and his family hard at work and poorly paid.

## WOULD THEY GET MORE IF THEY PRODUCED MORE?

Another class of gentlemen tell the farmers that what is the matter with them is that they do not know enough about farming. They do not raise enough on their land. They raise little because they lack the scientific knowledge with which to raise more. Scientists tell farmers this. James J. Hill, who has made millions—but not at farming—says the same. What hurts Mr. Hill more than anything else is that American farmers raise an average of only about thirteen bushels of wheat to the acre when they might as well raise thirty-three, as they did in Belgium before the war. It is easy enough to understand why Mr. Hill feels hurt. He is in the railroad business. He would make considerable more money if he could haul thirty-three

bushels of wheat for every thirteen bushels that his railroads now haul.

That does not much matter. The real question of importance is: Would the farmers make more money if they produced thirty-three bushels of wheat to the acre instead of thirteen? The easy way to answer this question is to say they would. The plain truth is that they would not—and of this there is proof.

#### THE CASE OF THE BELGIAN FARMERS.

The first fact that American farmers should consider is the Belgian farmers. They raise thirty-three bushels of wheat to the acre. Mr. Hill tauntingly says so—and it is true. But does this great production make the Belgian farmers rich? Did anybody ever hear of an American farmer emigrating to Belgium? Is it not a scandalous fact that the people of Belgium are miserably poor and densely ignorant? They are not to blame for being ignorant. They have no opportunity to learn. They are working too hard, raising thirty-three bushels of wheat to the acre.

But we need not go to Belgium to find proof that increased farm production does not mean correspondingly increased prosperity for the farmer. We have abundant proof in the United States.

When the first federal census was taken in 1790, ninety-seven Americans out of each one hundred were living on farms. When the last census was taken in 1910, only thirty Americans out of each one hundred were engaged in agriculture. Yet the thirty that remained on farms produced more pounds of food for each person in the United States than the ninety-seven produced in 1790. In other words, although the proportion of the population engaged in agriculture had been decreased two-thirds, the remaining third produced more for each person in the country than the entire three-thirds were able to produce in 1790. Why? Because improved agricultural machinery had vastly increased the power of each farmer to produce crops.

**RECEIVES DIMINISHING SHARE OF INCREASED PRODUCT.**

It would be idle to deny that the farmer has received nothing from his increased power of production. It would be as idle to assert that he has received all of his increased product. He has received nothing like his increased product. Like the industrial worker in the city, the farmer has received but a little of the increased product that improved machinery has enabled the farmer and the industrial worker to produce. Machinery has increased the productivity of the industrial worker by scores of times. The industrial worker lives better than his great-grandfather did, but he has to worry more about getting a job than his ancestors did, and he is still so poor that he cannot afford to live decently nor to keep his children in school long enough to give them a decent education. And the farmer is still poor. By keeping at it all the while, he manages to get along, but it is a hard struggle. His wife is compelled to work as hard as he does—or a little harder—his children are put to work when they should be at school, yet if one farmer's son out of a million happens to go to a city and do well, grafters in the city try to coddle the farmer by citing the instance as proof that in this glorious country poverty is no barrier to success.

Let us now look at such a world as no farmer ever saw. Suppose improved machinery were to make it possible for one man of each one hundred of our population to produce all the food that all the rest of us need. Suppose there were only 1,000,000 Americans instead of 30,000,000 engaged in agriculture. Would the million receive thirty times as much income as the 30,000,000 now receive?

Your Republican, Democratic and Progressive politicians will tell you they would. We Socialists tell you they would not.

**WOULD FORCE EXODUS OF FARM POPULATION.**

Let us tell you what would happen. Twenty-nine millions of Americans who are now living on farms would be

compelled to move into cities and seek employment in factories and in stores. They would be compelled to move into cities because they would be unable to find work on farms. They would be unable to find work on farms because there would not be thirty times the demand for farm produce that there was when 30,000,000 farmers were at work. The demand for farm products does not so much depend upon hunger as it does upon the ability of human beings in cities to buy something to eat. Every day there are persons in cities who are hungry, but they create no commercial demand for farm products for the reason that they have no money with which to pay for them. They have no money for the reason that they can find no employment in factories, stores and other places where men and women work.

Now imagine, if you can, what would happen in cities if 29,000,000 Americans from the farms should be compelled to move from their farms into the cities. They would at once be compelled to compete for jobs with the millions who are already in cities, not all of whom, by any means, are now able to find work. These 29,000,000 would be very eager for work. They would have to find work or starve. What would they do? What could they do? The only thing they could do would be to say: "We will work for less than those receive who are now at work."

#### EFFECTS OF COMPETITION FOR JOBS.

What would American employers do? What do they always do? Wouldn't they buy labor where they could get it the cheapest? That is what they have always done and are still doing. The standard of living would have to come down. The standard of living would come down. Every family would take twenty-five or thirty roomers, as each city family does in Hungary. Men, women and children would be huddled indiscriminately on the floor. Men who work nights would get into beds still warm from the men who had just arisen to work days. The decreased cost of producing food on the farm would result in cheaper food,

but it would not be enough cheaper to enable those in the cities to live as well as they now live, though it would be too cheap to make the farmers prosperous. Then, as now, the middlemen would skim off the cream. They would pay the farmer as little as they could and charge the consumer as much as they could. For most of the country, the conditions of life would actually be worse because—because invention had increased the productivity of farmers 3,000 per cent.

Does this sound like a dream? It is worse than that. It is a nightmare. But it is unfortunately a fact. It is not spun out of imagination—it is congealed from experience. Precisely this, on a smaller scale, has happened and is happening in the United States.

#### MULTITUDES DRIVEN FROM FARMS.

Improved agricultural machinery has driven from the farms sixty-seven of each ninety-seven who were engaged in agriculture 126 years ago. Foolish men in the cities talk about the foolishness of men in the country who do not know enough to stay on their farms. Other foolish men in the cities advocate a "back to the land" movement as the cure for all of our economic troubles. The fact is that farmers come to the cities because improved farm machinery is driving them out of the country. There is only a certain demand for food, and thirty can now better satisfy it than ninety-seven could in 1790. Under the present system, every improvement in agricultural machinery and agricultural methods that shall be made will result in driving more men from the farms to compete with the workers already in the cities for jobs.

It is easy enough to say this is not so, but it is not so easy to prove that it is not so. It is easy enough to say there is still more work in the country than there are men to do it. Many farmers make the mistake of trying to judge the conditions in the entire country by their own experience or that of a neighbor. Because old Bill Brown wanted a farm hand last week and could not find one—or



found one who was so disgusted and disheartened that he had turned to drink—the retort is made: “There is plenty of work in the country, but city workers are too lazy—or too drunk—to come out here and do it.” That is not a fair way to judge conditions. It is like judging a great picture by looking at one little corner of it. A great picture of a battlefield might look like a cornfield if there were a hill of corn in one corner of it and a spectator were to look only at the hill of corn and not at the charging horses or the guns.

#### BETTER FOR UNEMPLOYED TO REMAIN IN CITIES.

The fact is that those who are now engaged in farming could not if they would give continuous employment or even occasional employment to the millions who cannot find work in cities. It is also absurd to expect that a man who has a family settled in the city can leave them at any moment to go hundreds or thousands of miles into the country to get a few days' work. If he is out of work, the chances also are that he is out of money and therefore cannot pay his railroad fare, and, if he knew where the job was (which he doesn't) and had the money to pay his railroad fare (which he hasn't), in nine cases out of ten he would not be given enough work to buy a round-trip ticket and take care of his family while he was away. And no man, knowingly, is going to spend his last cent for a ticket from Chicago to a farm near Omaha to earn so little money that he will be more in debt when he returns than he was when he left. Rather than do this, men will remain in the cities and walk the streets looking for work that may return enough money to pay expenses. Men do thus remain in the cities and walk the streets looking for work. What wonder if some of them turn to drink?

What is the matter with the world? Nothing that has not been the matter with it from the beginning. A few men are running the world in their own interest. A few men are trying to roll in wealth at the expense of the rest of us. That is nothing new. That is what chattel slave-

holders tried to do—and did. The method by which a few men live on the others changes with the ages. When the people get their eyes on one method and abolish it, the grafters plan another method. They can no longer own men, but they can get hold of what men produce. That is all they ever owned men for. The wealth that men produce is what they are after. They rob industrial workers in the cities by one method and farmers by another method, but both methods are a part of the same system.

#### THE SOCIALIST REMEDY.

We Socialists suggest that the power be destroyed by which a few rob the many by owning privately what the many must use. We suggest that the people, through the government, displace the capitalist class by owning what the capitalist class now owns. We do not see how there could ever be any more robbery if the people themselves could produce wealth without the consent of the capitalist class and consume it without paying tribute to the capitalist class. We would have the people, collectively, own the great railroads and all of the great industries. Wherever we might find landlords robbing tenant farmers, we would have the people, collectively, own the land and permit farmers to work without paying tribute to a landlord. We would apply the principle of public ownership wherever we might find capitalists using private ownership to perpetrate private plunder. And we would have a government made responsive to the public will by the initiative, the referendum and the recall.

Every Republican, Democratic and Progressive politician wants to help you without interfering with the gentlemen who are using private ownership of what should be public properties to feather their own nests. They all tell you we Socialists are wrong. You have been voting as they told you, probably since you were old enough to vote. *If they know how to help you, why have they not done so?\**

\*"Inviting War to America," pp. 170-78.

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